



GREENSBORO URBAN AREA METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

TECHNICAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE

Minutes of April 22, 2004

1:00 p.m. Greensboro, NC

Blue Room

(County Commissioners' Briefing Room)

Old Guilford County Courthouse

ATTENDANCE

Jim Westmoreland	GDOT/MPO	Frank Wyatt	Greensboro Engineering & Inspections
Tyler Meyer	GDOT/MPO	Hanna Cockburn	Piedmont Triad Rural Planning Org.
Jeff Sovich	GDOT/MPO	Bill Marley	FHWA
Craig McKinney	GDOT/MPO	Karen Croysdale	FHWA
Carrie Reeves	GDOT	Mike Mills	NCDOT, Division 7
Kimberly Hinton	NCDOT	Mark Kirstner	Guilford County Community Dev.
Heidi Galanti	Greensboro Planning	Amy Dominello	<i>Greensboro News & Record</i>
Bill Ruska	Greensboro Planning	Paul Muschick	<i>Greensboro News & Record</i>
Scott Rhine	PART		

Tyler Meyer called the meeting to order at 1:07 p.m.

Action Items

1. Approve Minutes of February 26, 2004

Bill Ruska moved for approval of the minutes. Kimberly Hinton seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes as prepared.

2. Approve Annual MPO Self-Certification

Jeff Sovich advised that each year, the MPO must certify that its planning process complies with federal requirements including the Clean Air Act, the Civil Rights Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and others. This certification is distinct from the triennial USDOT certification, which involves on-site evaluation of the MPO's record-keeping methods, public notification procedures, and other details. The recommended action is to recommend that the TAC approve the MPO's planning process for fiscal year 2004.

Scott Rhine moved for the approval. Frank Wyatt seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to recommend that the TAC approve the Self-Certification resolution.

3. Approve UPWP for FY 2004-2005

Tyler Meyer advised that the Unified Planning Work Program accounts for planning grant funds which will be received over the next year, from July 1, 2004, through June 30, 2005. The UPWP includes accounting of expected costs by various work tasks as well as a summary of the sources and amounts of funding that will be available from each. The funding sources outlined include the regular allocation of planning funds, a summary of the use of the previously unobligated planning balance, STP-DA funds that were approved at the last MPO meetings to supplement planning studies, a range of funds related transit planning tasks, and state planning and research funds.

Among the planning projects anticipated this year is completion of the 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan and several related items including the Collector Streets Plan, a bicycle plan for the MPO area, and continued work on updating the Triad Regional Travel Demand Model. Other planning projects expected during fiscal year 2004-2005 are a range of special studies included in the Priority Needs List that would examine improvement options for the I-40 / Wendover Avenue interchange, land use issues around the US 158 bypass, and impacts on the Battleground Avenue Corridor resulting from the expected removal of existing rail lines. The requested action is to recommend that the TAC approve the UPWP for FY 04-05, including the updated figures for state planning and research funds, as presented.

Frank Wyatt moved to approve the UPWP as presented; Jim Westmoreland seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to recommend that the TAC approve the resolution adopting the UPWP.

4. Endorse Summerfield Grant Application for Pedestrian Master Plan

Jeff Sovich advised that the Town of Summerfield has applied for a grant from the NCDOT Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning Grant Initiative. The purpose of this grant program is to encourage development of comprehensive local bicycle plans and pedestrian plans. All municipalities in the state are eligible to apply. Local matching funds are required, and the maximum project cost is limited, both based on the municipality's population. This initiative has a total of \$750,000, of which \$350,000 is available during fiscal year 2004.

Summerfield's proposal would develop a town pedestrian master plan, focusing on sidewalks, future trail connections, and other pedestrian amenities. This project will tie in well with several projects either underway, or scheduled to begin soon in the MPO area. The total project cost is estimated at \$20,000, of which the town will provide \$4,000 in matching funds. Summerfield has requested that the MPO provide its endorsement of the application, which is required for approval of the grant. The requested action is to recommend that the TAC approve the resolution of endorsement as presented.

Mark Kirstner moved to approve the resolution as presented; Bill Ruska seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to recommend that the TAC approve the resolution endorsing the Summerfield Pedestrian Master Plan grant application.

Business / Potential Action Items

1. 2006 – 2012 MTIP Update

Jeff Sovich advised that a new date for the Priority Needs negotiation session with NCDOT has been set. The meeting will be held Tuesday, June 1, in Raleigh. In the interim, MPO staff are working on several studies that will assist in moving some of the priority projects into the TIP for eventual construction funding. Some of these studies have revealed crucial information about the projects. The study of the Horsepen Creek Road grade separation at the Urban Loop has identified the need to widen the bridge structure to accommodate the Horsepen Creek Road Widening Project when complete. The study of the Summit Avenue widening project has revealed that there is not enough traffic at present to justify the full extent of the widening, enabling some of this project's improvements to be incorporated into the US 29 / Eckerson Road interchange project. Staff will provide full briefings on these and other studies at upcoming meetings.

2. 2030 LRTP Update

Tyler Meyer advised that MPO staff continue to work diligently on the 2030 LRTP. The third round of public workshops has been re-scheduled from early May, to June 3, 7, 10, and 17. This schedule change will all additional preparation time to ensure the success of these workshops. The input received in these workshops will be instrumental in developing the draft final plan for review by the TAC. In the May MPO meetings, additional materials will be available to present, including the draft Thoroughfare Plan, draft Collector Streets Plan, and review of staff findings, including public input received during the second round of public workshops, which largely tended to reinforce input received during round one.

3. Railroad Overpass Replacement Study

Carrie Reeves advised that the Railroad Bridge Replacement Study has been evaluating the feasibility of replacing four railroad bridges in the City of Greensboro. The bridges under evaluation are located at Aycock Street, Benbow Road, East Market Street, and Tate Street. This study is the beginning of a very long range process that will involve exploring possible state and federal funding sources and opportunities for partnership with the railroad companies. The purposes of the study are to identify needed street and intersection improvements, bring existing bridges up to current standards, increase roadway traffic capacity, enhance pedestrian safety, promote multimodal transportation, accommodate the future high speed rail and commuter rail services, and provide opportunities for improved aesthetics.

These bridges all exhibit numerous deficiencies, including aging superstructures, substandard vertical clearances, inadequate railbed width, and inadequate pedestrian/vehicular corridor width. The recommendations of the study are to construct the bridges to accommodate three lane cross-section roadways (except the Aycock Street bridge, which will require a five lane cross-section), with sidewalks, grass strips, and wide outside lanes to accommodate bicycles. It is recommended that the Aycock Street bridge be constructed with steel girders and concrete retaining walls, while concrete arch construction is recommended for the other three bridges. The benefits provided by these recommendations would include increased

Estimated costs for these bridge replacements are \$11 million for Aycock Street, \$7 million for Benbow Road, \$30 million for East Market Street, and \$10 million for Tate Street. The East Market Street bridge has a significantly higher cost estimate than the other locations because of its close proximity to the East Friendly Avenue bridge. In order to achieve the minimum standard clearance at East Market Street, the East Friendly Avenue bridge would need to be replaced as well. This situation could present an opportunity to make these two bridges the centerpiece of a gateway to Greensboro's central business district from the east. Staff will provide additional information as further progress is made, related to this study.

4. East Guilford Traffic Separation Study

Craig McKinney advised that NCDOT has completed their study of traffic separation in Eastern Guilford County. One of the recommendations of the study is that the MPO pursue the closure of the Lowdermilk Street grade crossing. The full study recommendations were presented to the Planning Board in February with the expectation that the issue would be forwarded to the City Council the following month. However, the Planning Board had several concerns regarding this proposed closure and requested additional information and an extra public meeting with residents and businesses in the surrounding neighborhood.

Thirty-four residents and 4 business owners attended the public meeting and expressed significant concerns. Many in attendance stated that they could not see a benefit to the closure. The study recommendation was presented to the Planning Board again on Wednesday, April 21, with the provision that the Lowdermilk Street crossing be kept open for now, but reserving the option to initiate the process for closing the crossing at such time as it becomes necessary for safety or operational reasons, or at such time as future crossing improvements in the area, such as the construction of the Franklin Street grade separation, provide safer means of crossing the tracks elsewhere. The Planning Board rejected this modified recommendation. The study will likely be presented to the City Council on June 15, to obtain an endorsement of the study and its findings, along with the modified recommendations for the Lowdermilk Street crossing. The Lowdermilk Street crossing was the only location in this study that had any significant opposition to the recommendations that were made. The recommendations were modified to preserve the option to pursue closure at a later date because there is not an urgent safety or traffic issue at this location.

5. US 29 Access Management Study

Carrie Reeves advised that the US 29 Access Management Study has been conducted jointly with NCDOT. The goals of the study were to improve mobility, improve safety, identify solutions that will support adjacent land uses, and promote social and economic well-being. The study objectives were to promote a viable roadway corridor and to address issues of access, connectivity, land use, geometric design, transit service, and right-of-way constraints. The intended outcomes of the study consist of short-term projects to improve safety and require no right-of-way acquisition; intermediate-term projects that may require some right-of-way acquisition, but are warranted for safety reasons; and potential long-term projects and further study needs. Short-term projects could be implemented within 1 to 3 years, intermediate-term projects within 3 to 5 years, long term projects would be implemented beyond 5 years.

The study focused on a 4 mile section of US Highway 29 from Interstate 40 / 85 to Phillips Avenue. This corridor includes 16 cross streets, 14 of which cross at full or partial interchanges, while

McConnell Road and Tuscaloosa Street cross at grade separations. The study process involved 2 sets of public meetings. At the first round of meetings a variety of accident and traffic data was presented to the public, along with maps for attendees to identify areas of interest, concerns, and problems. Proposed recommendations, based mainly on issues identified in the first round of meetings, were presented at the second round meetings. The second round of meetings provided an additional opportunity for the public to voice concerns, identify problems, and give feedback on the proposed recommendations. On average, approximately 50 people attended each meeting. The meetings received thorough media coverage by the *Greensboro News & Record* as well as several television stations. Those in attendance were very interested in the project and have made repeated inquiries about its status.

The short-term recommendations of the study include the closure of ramps at Bothwell Street, Eaton Drive, Gatewood Avenue (west side), Headquarters Drive, Lutheran Street (east side), Ryan Street, Spencer Street, Textile Drive, and Woodside Drive (west side). Intermediate-term proposals consist of ramp and intersection improvements at East Market Street, Gatewood Avenue (east side), Hooks Street, East Lee Street, Phillips Avenue, and East Wendover Avenue. These improvements would include sidewalk removal, drainage improvements, landscaping, and guardrail installation. Potential long-term recommendations include consolidating and redesigning the remaining interchanges, and evaluating resulting impacts to right-of-way, environmental conditions, and neighborhood conditions.

6. MPO Strategic Reports

Tyler Meyer advised that there will be an informal public hearing regarding Bridford Parkway extension project, which was a priority project from previous years. The hearing will be held on Tuesday, May 11 at Guilford Middle School. The environmental document and preliminary design for the project will be presented, providing the public with the opportunity to make comments and learn more about the project.

The surface transportation re-authorization has not yet been approved, but will be entering the conference committee very soon. The House version of the re-authorization bill included earmarks for preliminary engineering for PART's rail line, provided that they can meet FTA's requirements for documentation. This is good news, because if accepted, it would move PART's project along further and faster than it otherwise might be at this time. The House bill also includes federal support for the Greensboro signal system replacement project, which would free up state and local resources for other items.

Other Items

1. TCC Member Report

Mike Mills advised that the I-40 widening project is on schedule to be completed by the end of May. Construction on the Western Urban Loop is slightly ahead of schedule. In response to several recent multi-vehicle crashes on I-85, between Rock Creek Dairy Road and NC 61, a study of the design of the roadway design, pavement design, and signage and graphics has been initiated. The results of the study are expected to be available soon.

With regard to the recent inquiries by Steve Gladson of the King's Mill / King's Forest Home Owners' Association, NCDOT has completed a re-examination of the design noise study, which is now under review by FHWA. FHWA will issue its response soon. In addition, NCDOT Division 7 representatives

have met with the home owners' association once and will meet at least once more, to answer questions and discuss concerns.

Scott Rhine advised that PART representatives have met with NCDOT officials regarding the ongoing effort to identify suitable locations for PART's future park-and-ride lot locations. Also, all MPOs have now signed the MOU for enhanced regional cooperation.

The next meeting of the TCC is scheduled for Thursday, May 27.

The TCC adjourned at 4:46 p.m.